

Department of Inspections and Appeals

Lucas State Office Building • Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0083

For Immediate Release:

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Public Input Sought on New Hospital Construction Rules

DES MOINES, IOWA (April 30, 2008) – The Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) is seeking public comment on proposed rules adopting new construction standards for hospitals. The Department presented its proposed rules, which adopt the 2006 edition of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) *Guidelines for Design and Construction of Health Care Facilities*, to the Iowa Hospital Licensing Board at the Board's March 27th meeting. Board members asked the Department to seek public comment on the rules before the Board would consider changing the state's standards. Currently, the rules require that all new construction or major renovations undertaken by hospitals use the old 2001 guidelines.

The AIA guidelines contain construction standards for use by architects, engineers, and health care professions in the United States and other countries who are planning new or renovated health care facilities. Currently, 42 jurisdictions and entities, including The Joint Commission and several federal agencies, use the guidelines, in whole or in part, when reviewing construction designs and plans, and inspecting completed building projects.

One of the hallmark provisions of the AIA's 2006 *Guidelines* requires that new hospitals be designed and built with single-patient rooms. Under the Department's proposed rules, critical access hospitals (CAHs) – facilities that serve rural populations throughout the state – are encouraged, but not required, to comply with the single-patient room requirement. CAHs that do not comply with the guidelines would be required to notify DIA of the reasons for the decision and provide supporting documentation.

Members of the Hospital Licensing Board have voiced concern about adopting the latest AIA design and construction guidelines, citing the single-patient room requirement as burdensome. Rather than utilize the variance process, which permits DIA to grant exceptions, the Iowa Hospital Association has asked the Hospital Licensing Board for a blanket exception to the single-patient room requirement, eliminating the 2006 AIA standard for private patient rooms.

DIA Director Dean Lerner disagrees with this approach. The Department believes that individual issues resulting from adopting the latest 2006 guidelines can and should be addressed through the variance process, rather than by diluting nationally-recognized minimum construction standards. "These new standards apply only to future construction and do not impose any changes

on existing hospitals,” Lerner added.

In presenting DIA’s proposed administrative rules to the Iowa Hospital Licensing Board, Director Lerner noted that adoption of the *2006 AIA Guidelines* would put Iowa “in the forefront” in hospital design and construction. “Eleven states currently use the 2006 Guidelines as the regulatory requirement for new hospital design and construction,” Lerner noted. An additional 16 states are either in the process of adopting or considering the adoption of the latest architectural guidelines.

“If Iowa wants its newly constructed and newly renovated hospitals to be built like hospitals of the future, not hospitals of the past, we need to adopt the *2006 AIA Guidelines*,” the Director added. As the regulator of Iowa’s hospitals, “care issues are paramount.”

A recent study cited by the AIA¹ has documented the advantages of private rooms in the provision of patient care, the Director noted. Among the major benefits of single-occupancy rooms are improvements in patient care, a reduction in the risk of infections, and greater flexibility in the hospital’s overall operation. The study further concluded that single-occupancy rooms reduce a patient’s length of stay, decrease the potential for medication errors and related medication cost, increase patient privacy, enhance communication between the patient and his/her health care provider, eliminate noises and decrease sleep disturbances.

“The Department is charged with acting in the best interest of the public,” said Lerner. “We are eager to hear this input, and to share it with the Hospital Licensing Board members, who ultimately have to approve these rules.”

Iowans may review the Department’s proposed administrative rule adopting the *2006 AIA Guidelines* by visiting DIA’s web site at <http://dia.iowa.gov/page20.html>. Individuals wishing to comment on the proposed rules, the single-patient room requirement, or other issues relating to minimum construction standards, should send their comments by May 20th to the following address: Iowa Hospital Licensing Board, Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, 312 East 12th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0083; e-mails may be sent to David.Werning@dia.iowa.gov.

The Iowa Hospital Licensing Board is scheduled to review the public comment at its next meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday, June 12, at 10 a.m. in the Lucas State Office Building.

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1 “*The Use of Single Patient Rooms versus Multiple Occupancy Rooms in Acute Care Environments*,” Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 2003